

Michigan Time Traveler

An educational supplement produced by Lansing Newspapers In Education, Inc. and the Michigan Historical Center Foundation.

KIDS' History

HOW DID YOUR GARDEN GROW?

In May gardens begin to grow in Michigan. One of the Time Traveler's favorite gardens is at the Mann House in Concord, just west of Jackson on M-60.

The Mann Family and Their Home



Daniel and Ellen Mann lived on a farm several miles outside Concord Township. Daniel's father came from New York in the late 1830s. Ellen's father, Lewis Keeler, came from Vermont in 1838.

The Manns had two daughters, Jessie (left) and Mary (right). In 1883 they moved into Concord to make it easier for the girls to

go to school. They hired Thomas McKenzie to design and build their Late Victorian style house. It had a typical front porch, a pyramid-roof tower above the front entrance and many windows to allow the maximum amount of sunlight into each room. They had a stable in the backyard.

Jessie and Mary became teachers. Mary taught in the Philippines. Jessie taught in Battle Creek. They both traveled throughout Asia. Eventually, they moved back to their home in Concord. Today, the house is part of the Michigan Historical Museum System. It still has the home furnishings, paintings and historic objects they had when growing up and those they collected on their travels.



A Modern Gardener

Nine-year old Kaitlyn Falsetta, of Grand Ledge, is a modern gardener. She helps her grandparents at the City Market in Lansing Saturday mornings. She first helps load their truck with flowers and vegetables in Grand Ledge. At the market, she sets out flowerpots, tells customers the kind of flowers they are selling and how much they cost. She helps carry people's flowers to their cars. At the end of the day, she helps reload her grandparents' truck. "I like to do the cash register the best, because I learn about change and math," Kaitlyn said. She attends Delta Center Elementary School.

The Manns' Garden

Jessie Mann wrote this about the gardens of her childhood:

These village homes were planned to be as self-sustaining as possible, with vegetable gardens, grape vines, berrybushes and fruit trees . . .

Planting the fruit and garden, seeding the lawn and pasture, were considered as essential as the house in making the home. The fruit and vegetables, supplemented bushels of potatoes and late apples brought from the farm. . . . Loads of hay and straw and bags of corn and oats were also brought from the farm for the horses. . . . Mr. Mann drove to the farm every week-day morning, bringing a can of milk when he came home at night.



The Mann House in Spring

Uncovering Living Treasures



Master Gardener Kath Ambs in the garden with Florentine Iris from the Victorian period

Master Gardener Kath Ambs attended Michigan State University's Master Gardener program. This year she volunteers working on the garden at the Mann House. She wanted to work there because it's the oldest garden project in Jackson County. Here's what she said about her work.

I like to giggle, laugh, have fun and get dirty—that's what gardening's all about.

I thought I was going to find herbs in the Mann House garden, but we didn't find many because of the shade. Underneath the raspberries, we uncovered treasures from twenty years ago—herbs such as sages, thymes, fennel—and moss and wildflowers—Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Lily of the Valley, Dame's Rocket, Phlox and Day Lilies.

This summer, we need to clean up the yard and see what we can grow in the shade. We plan to recondition the soil with fertilizers, then plant ferns, hosta and wildflowers that will survive in the wet and shady environment.

We haven't found many worms. That tells us that the soil is not real fertile, so we'll bring some into the gardens.

Victorian Gardens

Master Gardener Kath Ambs talks about Victorian Gardens from the time when the Mann House was built.

In winter, the Victorians dreamt about their summer gardens and ordered packaged vegetable seeds from Shaker catalogs. If they had any money left over, they ordered flower seeds to plant for decoration.

In spring, early April, they planted seeds in pots inside so they could germinate. They waited and watched for the seeds to sprout before transplanting them outside. They watered the seedlings so they wouldn't get dry and thinned them—keeping the strongest ones and pinching out the weak ones.

To determine when the last frost would end, they used *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, felt the soil with

their hands to see if it was warm enough and read the thermometer. They plowed the soil to get it ready for their gardens and put manure from their horses in the soil.

In the summer, early June, gardens needed weeding. Children hoed the garden so the weeds would not take the nutrients out of the soil and starve the vegetables. If it didn't rain for a week, children also carried buckets of water to the gardens. If the family had chickens, they let them run through the garden to eat the bugs. In late summer and early fall, they harvested their fruits and vegetables and canned the produce for winter.

When the vegetable plants died, they pulled them out of the soil and put hay on top of the garden so that the soil would not blow away. They put the garden to sleep. The snow would begin to fall again and the women began reading the catalogs again.

At the Michigan Historical Museum

- Learn about Victory Gardens in the Arsenal of Democracy gallery.
- The Michigan Historical Museum is located two blocks west of the Capitol in downtown Lansing. Museum admission is free. Hours: Monday-Friday: 9 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.; Saturday: 10 a. m. - 4:00 p.m.; Sunday: 1-5 p.m. The museum telephone hotline: (517) 373-3559.
- On-line: Visit our Web site: <http://www.michiganhistory.org>

Things To Do

- Plant your own garden.
- Check the grocery advertisements in the newspaper and see what vegetables are on sale.
- Join the Junior Master Gardener program <http://jmgkids.com/>

Visit gardens in Michigan:

- Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park in Grand Rapids <http://www.meijergardens.org/>
- Michigan 4-H Children's Gardens in East Lansing <http://4hgarden.msu.edu/main.html>
- Cooley Gardens in Lansing <http://www.cooleygardens.org/>
- Hidden Lake Gardens in Tipton <http://www.cpp.msu.edu/hlg/>
- Dow Gardens in Midland <http://www.dowgardens.org/>
- Cranbrook House and Gardens http://www.cranbrook.edu/housgard/H_G-home.html



Tea Party for Teddy Bears and Dolls at the Mann House

At the Mann House

205 Hanover, Concord, MI 49237

Hours: Noon to 4:30 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday, Memorial Day through Labor Day. Telephone (517) 524-8943 or TDD (800) 827-7007.

June 21: Do 19th Century House and Farm Chores. 10:00 a.m. to noon.

June 28: Play Victorian Games. 10:00 a.m. to noon.

July 5: Have a Tea Party for Dolls and Bears. 10:00 a.m. to noon.

July 7: "Spend Sunday on the Great Lawn of the Mann House" with lemonade and croquet. 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

August 9: Make Victorian Paper Dolls and Cut Paper Shapes. 10:00 a.m. to noon.

Check out other Mann House events on the web at <http://www.michiganhistory.org/museum/musemann/>



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